RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 13th May, 1988/23 Vaisakha, 1910 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, The Deputy Chairman in the Chair.

OBITUARY REFERENCE

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of Shri Ram Sahai, a former Member of the Rajya Sabha from the State of Madhya Pradesh.

Shri Ram Sahai was born in 1925 at Doboh in District Bhind of Madhya Pradesh and had his education at Bhilsa and Bhopal. Shri Sahai passed the Vakalat Examination of the Gwarlior State and Vaidya Pariksha of Nikhil Ayurved Vidya Pith, Allahabad. An agriculturist and a lawyer, Shri Sahai left legal practice in 1942 to participate in the Quit 'India Movement' and suffered imprisonment. He had special interest in education and was associated with a number of educational institutions and also worked for the eradication of untouchability. Shri Ram Sahai was instrumental in the introduction of prohibition in District Bhilsa of Gwalior State. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly from 1947 to 1950 and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the erstwhile State of Madhva Bharat. He was a Member for this House for three terms from April, 1956 to April, 1974. He was a very active member of the House and always pleaded the case of the Harijans and the weaker sections of the society. Shri Sahai was twice nominated to the Panel of Vice-Chairmen of the Rajya Sabha and presided over the sittings of the House with distinction and ability.

We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri Ram Sahai.

I request Members to rise in their places and observe silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.

(Hon Members then stood in silence for one minute)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Additional Secretary will convey to the members of the bereaved family our deep sence of sorrow and pre. found sympathy.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now QUESTIONS. Question No. 281.

Shortage of Ferrous Scrap in the Integrated Steel Plants

*281. SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the integrated steel plants are likely to face an acute sortage of ferrous scrap from this year; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor and the steps taken by Government so far to ensure regular availability of the scrap?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House .

Statement

(a) In 1988-89, the integrated steel plants of SAIL are expected to be self-sufficient in their requirements of scrap. TISCO and Visakhapatnam Steel Plant are however, likely to purchase some scrap from external sources. Long term projections indicate that steel plants will have to purchase about 14 lakh tonnes of scrap by 1994-95.

(b) The introduction of continuous casting technology in various steel plants had led to an improvement in the yield of steel and a consequent reduction in the internal generation

of scrap, necessitating external purchases to supplement internal generation. Availability is being increased by increasing scrap recovery from existing dumps in steel plants. In addition, steel plants are considering setting up captive plants for the manufacture of Hot Briquetted Iron which is substitute for scrap Imports of scrap/Hot Briquetted Iron will also be considered to the extent unavoidable to bridge the gap between indigenous requirements and demand.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: Madam, thte Minister's statement says that in 1988-89, the integrated steel plants of SAIL are expected to be self-sufficient in the requirement of scrap. But, according to a study made by the MSTC an MECON, the integrated steel plants will be short of scrap by 4,50,000 tonnes in 1988-89 and 5,50,000 tonnes in 1989-90. The estimated figure of 14 lakh tonnes by 1994-95 is correct. But, this year itself we will be short by 4,50,000 tonnes, particularly for the Bhilai Steel Plant. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what steps are being taken to supply this scrap to the steel plants.

Secondly, Madam, the MSTC is failing to procure the imported scrap and. I believe, because of its failure to act upon the tender which was submitted, the rate has increased. Particularly in 1987-88, it has tendered but not lifted this crap. As a result, the indigenous scrap rate has also increased. They should have got it at 140 dollars a tonne. But now they have procured at 140 to 180 dollars per tonne. Why is this discrepancy coming? Of Course, I know, the MSAC is not under the Steel Ministry. Why have they failed to procure the scrap last year?

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: The hon. Member has referred to certain figures about the study conducted by the MECON. The figures are correct inasmuch as they indicate that in 1988-89 there will be a deficit of 4.81 lakhs. I may tell the hon Member that this includes the TISCO. The figures in my reply that I have given in writing, here is inclusive of TISCO. I may inform the hon. Member that during the current year the integrated steel plants which are under SAIL, which are under our direct control, will be self-sufficient.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPNDRA: Including Bhilai?

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: Of course, in Bhilai we are having some problem but what we procure from one plant, consume in the other plants and no procurement from outside SAIL are also no import of scrap is necessary for the integrated steel plants as this stage. So far as the other question is concerned, the hon. Member is under the impression that perhaps MSTC is not under the control of the steel Ministry.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA. RA: Not Commerce?

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: That is MMTC. This is MSTC There is the difference of M and S. MSTC is under the control of the Steel Ministry. So far as the import of steel is concerned, the hon. Member is correct in saying that the international rates have risen from 140 dollars to 180 dollars or something like that. I need not mention the rates. He must be knowing it better. But for the first time we have made arrangements to import scrap from the Soviet Union, and one lakh tonnes shipment has started. We are expecting to import five lakh tonnes of melting scrap from the Soviet Union and for the first time during the current year we have opened this trade with the rupee payment area, that is with the Eastern Europe. So far as the availability of scrap is concerned, I may assure the hon. Member particularly and the House that there will be no difficulty of scrap either for the interested steel plants for which we do not import scrap or for the mini steel plants in which he may be interested or the hon.

Member, Mr. Kulkarni, may raise the question.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: The Minister has kindly referred to the problems of mini steel plants also. They require about the million tonnes of scarp. That is the shortage this year. And they are also not getting the imported scrap in time. The MSTC is not registering these firms promptly and giving the permits for import of scrap. Why don't you allow them to import directly? Or you can charge some permit charges from these steel plants as the commission which you otherwise charge as a registration charge and allow them to import directly, because MSTC is not able to supply them imported scrap.

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: It is not a question of taking charges for the MSTC. The question is of saving the foreign exchange. We would like to procure as much scrap indigenously as possible and wherever there is difficulty, we will try to import and try to import in such a way that our foreign exchange is saved to the best of our ability. As he has mentioned about the availability of scrap, whoever registers the claim, as per guidelines issued by the Steel Ministry and the MSTC, his claim will be entertained under the guidelines. I do not know to which unit the hon. Member has referred to. In case you have any particular unit in mind, you can certainly tell me which is the unit which is entitled, but is not getting, I will certainly look into it.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: The Minister in his reply stated that there is a possibility of achieving self-sufficiency in scrap for the integrated steel industry. Is he aware that small-scale foundry industry which also requires a foundry-grade scrap, is facing shortage, and there is a widespread shortage in the country? The foundry industry in Gujarat, in Maharashtra and in Tamil Nadu is groaning under short supply. Will the Minister assure that small-scale industry through their respective State Industrial Corporations will be assured foundry-grade steel scrap; otherwise the entire setup in the small-scale sector will be at a great disadvantage.

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: I do not agree with the hon. Member that there is 'widespread' shortage of scrap in the country. Of course, there is shortage but it is not widespread.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: What is the difference?

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: You are giving an alarming picture; I am not giving an alarming picture on that the shortage is widespread.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Government cannot give it; Government will never agree that there are starvation deaths. How can they agree?

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: I do not agree with that. I am not made that way. If the situation is like that, I will certainly share the anxiety with you; I will not hide anything from Parliament. But I can tell the hon. member that shortage will not be there.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : क्या उपसभापति महोदया, स्क्रैप का जो अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में मूल्य है उस लिहाज से ज्यादा इम्पोर्ट करने की हमारी क्षमता नहीं होगी, हमारी जो फोरेन एक्सचेंज की स्थिति है उसको देखते हुए। इसलिये मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहूंगा कि इसका सब्स्टीट्यूट बनाने का जो आजकल बहुत से देशों ने शुरू किया है स्पंज आइरन से तो उसके बारे में मैं चाहूंगा कि क्या उसकी इकोनोमी को गवर्नमेंट ने खड़ा किया है कि उस को कमर्शियल लैवल पर पैदा करें? उसके बारे में क्या स्थिति है इस संबंध में मंत्री महोदय प्रकाश डालें।

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: The hon. Member should feel happy that we are importing from rupee area whatever scrap we require. So

far as the other question is concerned, whether we have examined the economics of saving the foreign exchange in importing scrap, hon. Member will be happy to know that we have already taken steps to import scrap from U.S.S.R. We are also trying to use as less scrap as possible. The latest technology available in the world is that we can have 75 per cent to 80 per cent sponge iron, and 20 to 25 per cent scrap. We have asked mini-steel plants also to move towards modernisation. If sponge iron is produced in the country for which we have delicensed, the industry, anybody anywhere in the country can start a sponge iron unit which can be used as a substitute for scrap. We are at it and I can assure the hon. Member that in future, there will be no difficulty.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Next question

Development of Multi-lingual Character Generator

*282. SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras and Doordarshan Kendra, Madras have jointly developed a Multi-lingual Character Generator;

(b) whether the equipment was successfully tested nearly 20 months ago at Doordarshan Kendra, Madras and it was witnessed by the then Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting;

(c) whether the Computer was demonstrated before the Prime Minister in Delhi on May 22, 1986 and that he had promised all help for improving upon the equipment;

(d) whether Government had also assured in September, 1987 to sanction more than Rs. 35 lakhs for demonstrating the technology in two Doordarshan Kendras but failed to release any amount;

(e) if so, what are the reasons for not giving adequate encouragement to the tele-computer project; and

(f) the reasons for which the multilingual character-generator which was in service in Madras Doordarshan till the middle of 1986 was not further used.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR) (a) to (f) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) ,(b) and (f) The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras developed a multi-lingual computer based charater generator which was interfaced with the TV system at Doordarshan Kendra, Madras for some time for experimentation. It was found that the equipment did not conform to professional broadcast standards. The deficiencies were explained by officers of Doordarshan to officers of IIT, Madras.

(c) No, Sir. What was shown to the Prime Minister was the video to tape containing out put of the equipment. Help was assured for improving the equipment.

(d) and (e) No, Sir. Assistance was assured for improvement of the equipment but for that IIT, Madras was required to send to the Department of Electronics a specific research and development proposal, which has not been sent so far.

SHRI YALLA SESI BHUSHANA RAO: Sir, the IIT Madras and Doordarshan Madras jointly developed a computer system for sub-titling any programme in 14 languages, and still it remains unutilised. This system facilitates the non-Hindi-speaking audience to enjoy the Hindi programmes as well. It worked in Madras Door-